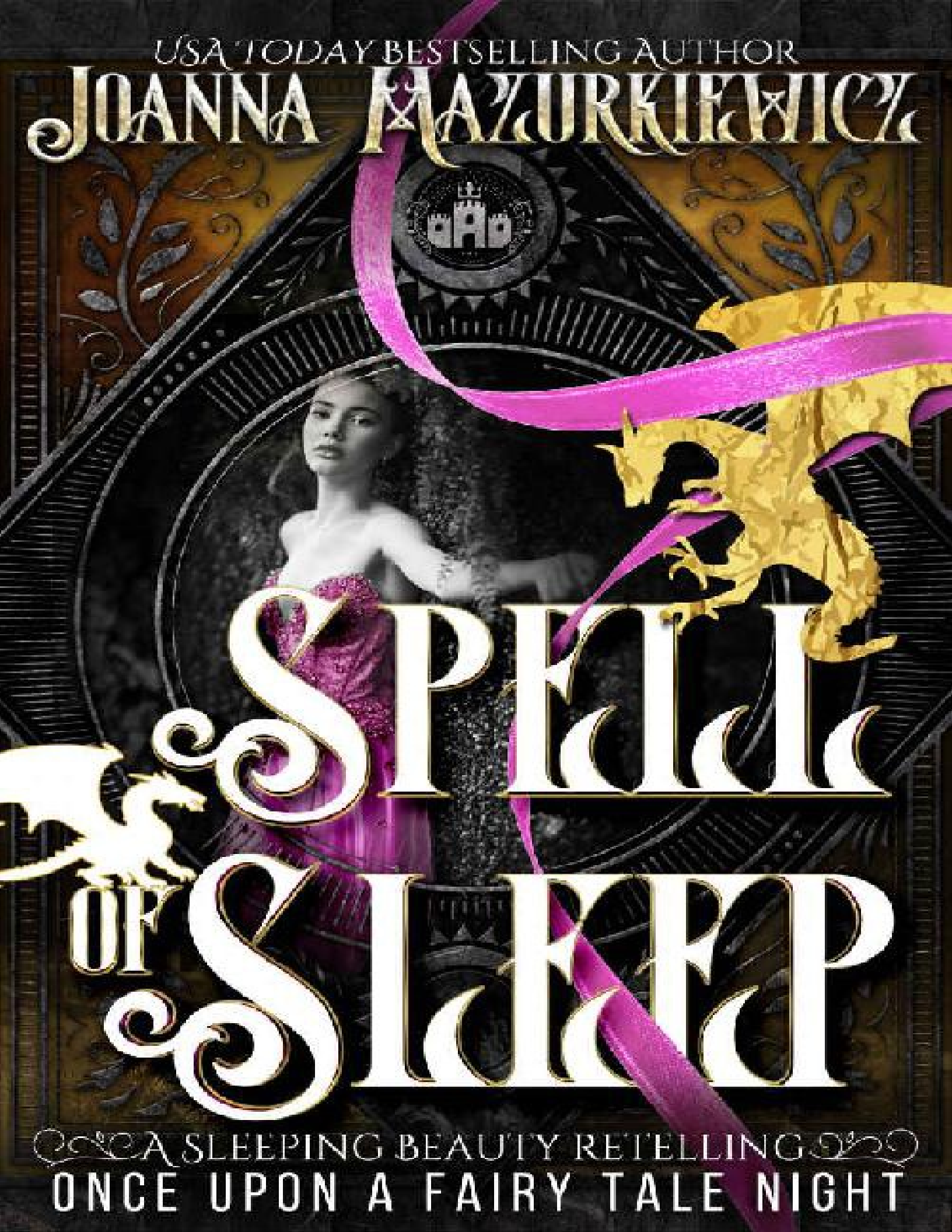


USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JOANNA KAZURKIEWICZ



# SPIRIT OF SLEEP

~ A SLEEPING BEAUTY RETELLING ~  
ONCE UPON A FAIRY TALE NIGHT

# SPELL OF SLEEP: SLEEPING BEAUTY RETELLING

ONCE UPON A FAIRY TALE NIGHT

JOANNA MAZURKIEWICZ

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# SPELL OF SLEEP: SLEEPING BEAUTY RETELLING

## CHAPTER 1

Nadine

“I CAN’T BELIEVE that I waited so long for you,” he whispered into my ear as he started moving his lips over the line of my neck. I tilted my head backwards, closing my eyes. The heat of his breath alone was turning me on. His hand began caressing me, all the way down to my thigh. I was completely lost in the moment, wondering why we hadn’t got together sooner. We had to be very careful. My father didn’t know about us and I knew for a fact that he would never approve of this relationship.

Thomas was very handsome and he also happened to be a dragon shifter. His kingdom was in constant war with Farawell, which made this whole relationship very complicated. My father hated him; he blamed Thomas for my mother’s death and wouldn’t hear of any talks about a ceasefire, no matter what I said or how hard I tried.

He suddenly stopped kissing me and looked at me intently, his eyes were filled with concern. Had we been careful enough? No one knew that I wasn’t in my chamber in the castle. I just wanted to enjoy this moment and worry about my father later. He would eventually come around. I just had to convince him that Thomas had good heart.

“What’s wrong? Just kiss me, let’s not waste any more time,” I told him.

“We both know that this is too dangerous Nadine, what if your father banishes you from the kingdom when he finds out about us? I would never forgive myself if your relationship with him changes,” he said. I sighed loudly, knowing that he was right.

My father was a proud man and he would perceive this as a massive betrayal to my family.

“He doesn’t even know that we have met each other yet and I can keep up the pretense. He refuses to discuss anything to do with my mother’s death and he won’t listen to anything I have to say when I try,” I admitted.

Thomas held me close and the heat within me was rising fast. His hand rested only inches away from my inner thigh. I was so wet for him, even though we hadn’t slept together yet. We had been taking things slowly.

His eyes sparkled with his magical current and the heat jolted through my core. I inhaled sharply when he pulled me even closer to his body. He was hard and that just made me wetter for him. Damn it, Martha was right. Thomas most definitely wanted me.

“He thinks that I used my magic to turn the carriage that she was travelling in. That could well be

the case. Our kingdoms have been at war for years, but right now, I don't want to think about your parents. You're driving me insane Nadine," he said.

He kissed me again, slowly devouring my mouth. My sex throbbed with the need of release. I had had lovers in the past, but Thomas was the only one that made me lose control so quickly. I was breathless, stroking and guiding his hard erection closer to where I needed it to be. I moaned when he slipped his tongue into my mouth, caressing me gently.

All of a sudden, I sensed magic spreading all around me. The wave of energy rippled through my core. It felt like someone was sticking needles into me. I squeezed my eyes closed, trying to breathe evenly before another wave of energy came out of nowhere and washed through me again.

Then I heard a laugh, a very loud, womanly laugh that echoed throughout the forest. We were near the mountains, reasonably high up. How could anyone know that I was here? I had made sure that I wasn't followed.

Thomas pulled away and we both saw a woman coming towards us. She looked like a witch. She wasn't a fae, but she obviously had magic, extending her wand out in front of her. The witch's eyes were swirling with purple magic.

"Who are you and what the hell do you want from us?" I shouted as Thomas grabbed my hand and took up a protective stance in front of me. The witch was much older than me. She looked like she could have been around my father's age and she was breathtakingly beautiful. Her blond hair was straight and shiny and her expensively tailored, bright green dress exposed her curves in all the right places. She laughed again and as she did, I faintly recognised her from somewhere, I just couldn't recall where.

"My name is Julietta ... and who do we have here; a dragon shifter and the Princess of Farawell Kingdom. Oh my, I see that you have both been very, very naughty," she said, waving her wand until the sparkles flew out of it. Thomas' body stiffened and his eyes widened.

"What do you want witch?" Thomas asked.

"I'm the voice of your conscience," she whispered dramatically, leaning so close to his face that I was ready to slap her away from him when I suddenly realized that she was trying to curse him.

"Come away Thomas. Don't let her use her magic on you. Thomas!" I frantically shouted at him, trying to make him look at me, but he was already becoming sleepy. I shook him firmly, but his lids were slowly closing until he passed out on the ground. I held him in my arms, trying to wake him, but it was too late - the witch's charm had already taken hold of him.

I glanced back up at Julietta. She smirked at me and then full on cackled.

"What the hell have you done to him? What do you want from me?" I asked her; trying to remember where I had met her before but my mind was drawing a blank. The witch must have used some kind of dark magic to track us down. Only Martha knew that I was planning to see Thomas so how did Julietta find us? The changeling would never betray me. I trusted her. She was like my very own fairy godmother, maybe a little drunk at times, but still my godmother.

Julietta's eyes stopped shimmering with magic. She tossed her hair behind her and leant down, so her eyes were level with mine. She had incredible power and I had a feeling that she was much older than she appeared to be. My lungs stopped working and my breath ceased in my lungs as I fell into her heavy gaze.

"You have ruined my plans, Princess Nadine and now your lover has been charmed with the sleeping spell. Only true loves kiss can awaken him; but since he's not in love with you yet, then his life is lost to this endless nap forever," she laughed.

I felt like a pile of bricks had cascaded down into my stomach. I was trying to lift my heavy limbs;



do something, anything, that would allow me to destroy the spell but I couldn't move. We had been waiting for each other for so long, only to have our intimate moment destroyed within seconds.

"Please undo this! Use your magic to free him. I don't even understand what I did to upset you but I can fix it, just let me try!" I pleaded as my whole world was falling apart.

"It doesn't matter now my dear Princess. It's too late. The Fae King will discover the truth soon enough. Destiny may not be on my side at the moment, but I might still be able to change its path. The shifter: Thomas, will remain under the sleeping curse until I choose to release him ....

Her voice became distant and my eyelids became heavy. I felt so tired, I tried fighting it off, I couldn't fall asleep now but the tranquil silence was making me drowsy, as the voice kept whispering:

"Sleep my Princess. There is nothing you can do to help him. Thomas cannot fulfill his destiny standing by your side."



"NADINE ... Nadine ... wake up love. You're under a spell," someone was saying, slapping me gently. I mumbled something barely coherent, feeling so drained. I didn't want to open my eyes just yet.

I recognised Martha's voice and forced my eyes open as I recalled kissing Thomas and everything that had happened shortly afterwards. It was really bright as I squinted to try and focus on Martha's face whilst gathering my thoughts to tell her everything.

Martha was staring at me with a worried look on her face. That was never a good sign. Suddenly, the whole situation came flooding back. I saw Thomas in the forest and then the witch appeared. She cursed him and then I must have passed out.

"What's going on? Where's Thomas?" I was asking Martha, as I frantically looked around. Her silent, sombre expression was scaring me a little.

"You need to listen to me very carefully Nadine. Thomas has been cursed with a sleeping spell. You must have called to me through our connection before you passed out," she said and I blinked a few times, trying to fully assemble my thoughts.

She was right, that bitch had used her magic to render him unconscious.

"It was that witch Julietta. She said that I had ruined her plans. What's happened to Thomas? Where is he?" I asked, trying to get up but I still felt so weak.

"Calm down love. Your handsome shifter is fine. He's asleep and we are currently in his dreams," Martha explained and then continued. "You only have one chance to remind him of who you are and to break this damn curse."

"What are you talking about?" I asked her, still deeply confused.

"I don't know the witch that charmed him but I do recognise her spell. I asked a friend of mine, a fae, to create this dream in Thomas's mind. You'll meet with him soon, but he won't remember you," Martha kept saying.

"What? That doesn't make any sense. If he has been spelled by that crazy witch then we have to break her curse," I said, starting to wonder if maybe Martha was day drunk.

She shook her head. "Yes, you're right, but this witch is very powerful and Thomas's spell cannot be broken from the outside. You're still asleep, but your consciousness has now merged into his dream. Thomas won't remember you. He thinks that he's someone else in this vision. Both of you will

meet and it will be up to you to bring him back,” Martha explained.

I bit down on my bottom lip, trying to digest what she was telling me. She was digging around for something in her pocket. After a moment, she took out a small bottle and drunk from it. I could smell the rum. Martha liked her liquor, sometimes too much.

“How can I bring him back?” I asked her.

“With true loves kiss. The witch erased his memories. You must let him see you and then in the right moment, you kiss him.”

She made it all sound very simple, but there was one pretty major issue: Thomas wasn’t in love with me. I had feelings for him, but this was only our first proper meeting since we had met each other.

“How long do I have?” I asked her, thinking that this sounded like an impossible task. Martha’s magic helped me out the first time. Her potion allowed him to notice me beneath a disguise. Our feelings were mutual but we needed time to get to know each other. I wasn’t convinced that I could just make him remember me so easily.

“You have one chance to break the curse. One night should do. It only took me one night to seduce Darragh,” she said and I just numbly nodded at her, knowing exactly what she was talking about. The problem was that I wasn’t her – the sassy Martha with a great figure and ample cleavage that men couldn’t take their eyes off. She was a changeling and I was only a human.

“I don’t know what to do or where to begin. Thomas only noticed me because of the potion,” I said, worried that I was going to lose him forever. Martha put her hands on my arms and shook me firmly.

“No, he noticed you because of your sweetness and strength Nadine. You were destined to end up together and my potion only helped speed up the timeline a little. Now it’s your chance to charm him, just be yourself and this plan will work out.”

“So there is no other way? What if I fail?” I asked her.

“You won’t fail. He won’t be able to resist you, just remind him of why he fell for you the first time,” she said. “Close your eyes and count to three. Together we will break the curse and destroy the witch.”

I wasn’t sure that this was possible but I was willing to try anything to break that damn curse.

I did as she said, deep down terrified of what might happen if I was unable to break this curse and Thomas had to stay asleep forever. Moments later, I opened my eyes again and I was back in the forest. The sun was shining and the birds were chirping merrily.

It wasn’t Farawell though, so I figured that this must be part of the vision that Martha had created earlier on. The vision from the sleeping curse that Thomas was currently trapped in.

I started walking north because I didn’t know what else to do.

My thoughts were racing and my palms were damp with sweat. Martha hadn’t really given me any instructions on how to find Thomas in the first place.

After half an hour my feet began to ache, I kept telling myself that there was probably a village or town not far from here. I started hearing some noises; roaring actually, so I stopped. All of a sudden, from out of nowhere, someone crashed into me and I fell backwards into the bushes.

The heavy body slammed right on top of me and I was squashed into the ground. Branches were digging into my back and I could hardly breathe.

“Get off me!” I shouted, annoyed that whoever it was didn’t seem in any hurry to move.

“There he is,” another voice said. I suddenly realised that I was surrounded by at least three men. They pulled up the fellow that was on top of me and I could finally breathe again.

When I got up, I thought there must be something wrong with my vision because now I only saw two guards. They were restraining Thomas, who seemed very annoyed. He was trying to pull away from them, but one kicked him hard, so he stopped wriggling. “We do apologise my lady, but we were after this thief. I hope he didn’t harm you in any way.”

I wiped the leaves from my dress, trying to gather my thoughts. These guards were from Farawell, but this wasn’t my kingdom. And there he was, standing in front of me looking at me as a complete stranger.

“No, I’m fine. Why are you arresting this man? He works for me in the stables,” I said, placing my hands on my hips, giving them both a stern look. Thomas looked completely astonished by my statement but luckily the guards were looking at me, not him, so they didn’t notice.

“My lady, let me get this clear. Have you asked this man to steal the King’s knives for you?” the taller guard asked and my face dropped. Damn it. I didn’t think that far ahead.

“Idiot,” Thomas muttered, shaking his head with that arrogant smile. Did he just insult me?

“Yes, because the knives belong to me. I’m Princess Nadine,” I announced and then the both guards started to laugh.

“Come on Marcus, arrest the lady. I believe she’s Duncan’s accomplice that we have been searching for.”

## CHAPTER 2

“What is wrong with you? Why would you even say something so absurd?” Thomas asked me later on. The guards had tied us together and we were put onto a carriage that stank of shit. The guards hadn’t even let me explain myself any further.

They had seized me along with Thomas. I kept yelling, telling them that they were making a mistake, but here in this vision, they had no idea who I was.

Thomas didn’t look happy at all. Our first meeting couldn’t have been more unromantic in the least; he certainly wasn’t going to fall head over heels for me as I had rather expected.

“I don’t know, I thought I could help you,” I answered, trying to ignore the waves of heat when I stared at him.

“I don’t need your help my lovely. These guards are idiots; but the King’s knives are valuable and you just wasted a lot of my valuable time,” Thomas barked back and my jaw dropped. Somehow, Thomas believed that it was all my fault that he’d gotten caught.

I bit down on my bottom lip, trying to think of something to say, but nothing came to my mind. There was nothing romantic about being stuck with him in what it seemed to be nothing better than a pig cart.

“You don’t need to act so ungrateful,” I snapped, trying to loosen the rope that was rubbing tightly against my skin.

He laughed and shook his head.

“Who are you love? You cannot possibly be the King’s daughter. I heard that she’s rather unattractive,” Thomas said.

I told myself to stay calm. He didn’t know me and this wasn’t the Farawell I knew.

“Let’s just focus on the fact that I was trying to help you,” I said, annoyed that he was being so rude. “But from now on, you’re on your own.”

I turned my back to him, contemplating my options. There weren’t many. I wanted to sit down but I was too proud to admit that to Thomas. Standing in the carriage was uncomfortable and the guards were going pretty fast so it was hard to keep my balance.

“Stop sulking lovely, you should just have kept your mouth shut,” he whispered, leaning close. His breath on my skin was making me hot. Damn. I really had to get hold of myself. This wasn’t the Thomas that I was used to. In this world, the relationship that we developed didn’t really matter.

My real Thomas was conscious of my reputation and my father. Upon meeting him for the first time, I felt an instant connection between us. Martha had insisted that her potion only directed him to me but I wasn’t so sure. I was never as confident as she was. Martha mentioned that I only had one chance and if that was the truth then our moment was ruined. I had to find a way to warm him up to me

and quickly.

“Please stop talking to me. I would like to enjoy peace and quiet before we arrive at wherever we are going,” I said, massaging my forehead to quell the oncoming headache.

Many questions were rolling through my mind. Why would he try to steal the King’s knives and who was that witch Julietta? She mentioned the Fae King, but I have no idea who he is. Maybe she had made a mistake.

He finally went quiet and dragged me down beside him so that I could rest for a bit. After another half an hour, we arrived at what seemed to be our destination. It was a sort of camp. I could see many soldiers scattered around the hill.

“What the hell is this place? I demand to speak to someone in charge,” I said, when two other soldiers dragged me out of the carriage. The rope was very tight and my wrists felt raw. No one answered me. Moments later, they took me and Thomas inside the building that looked like an old fortress where the prison had been set up.

“You two will stay here until tomorrow. There are guards outside, so don’t even think about trying to escape,” the shorter guard said after we were both thrown into a cramped cell.

“Why are you locking me up in here? I haven’t done anything wrong, it was this man that was caught stealing. I demand to speak to someone with authority!”

The guard scratched his head and gave me a silly smile before walking off and leaving me alone with Thomas.

I ran to the bars and shook them, demanding that he come back right at that minute. That didn’t work. I tried to kick the bars and ended up hurting my foot. After I had calmed down a little, I turned to face Thomas. He didn’t pay any attention to me, he just sat on the ground and it looked like he was reading something. It was some kind of small book that he must have taken from his pocket whilst I was having my temper tantrum.

It was going to get dark soon and my one chance to make him remember me was rapidly slipping away. I really needed to find a way to turn this situation around. Martha had been very clear that nothing else would break this curse.

I started pacing around the small cell, trying to think on my feet. After about an hour another guard showed up with something that resembled food. I was careful, but also hungry so I ate the mystery soup as quickly as I could.

The guards didn’t want to hear me out, they simply shut the gate and left yet again.

“Just give it a rest lovely. We aren’t getting out of here tonight, it’s as simple as that,” he said, putting his strange book away. The sun was slowly dipping behind the horizon, so it was probably too dark for him to read now. We only had a small window, so barely any light got inside.

I remembered our first meeting. Thomas saved me from a wolf that had appeared in my path. Martha had managed to use her magic to influence Thomas to change his direction so we could bump into each other. Neither of us had expected to see the wolf though. The animal came from out of nowhere and I would have died if it wasn’t for Thomas. When he realised who I was, he vanished. I had a feeling that he was afraid of my father and yet surprised by our brief but instant attraction. It wasn’t long before I heard from him again. He always made sure that we met far away from Farawell. People in the kingdom knew who I was, many easily recognised me, so we were both extra careful.

“Stop calling me lovely. It’s all your fault that we are stuck here,” I snapped at him, losing my patience. He lifted his head and glanced at me with his deep blue eyes, cocking his head to the side. In that moment I felt like he was looking through my skin into my soul.

“Why? You’re very lovely ... well, that is until you open your mouth,” he laughed and I took a

step forward, ready to punch him.

He still had that arrogant smile on his face and I was fuming. He leaned towards me like he was ready to kiss me. His eyes paralysed me for a moment. I was lost in my old memories of us, whilst my heart was jackhammering inside my chest. He stayed still for several seconds. There was almost a kind of recognition in his eyes. Maybe he was finally starting to remember me.

“You’re being disrespectful right now,” I told him, trying to contain my emotions but that wasn’t easy. His lips were so inviting and he had been kissing me right before Julietta interfered and caused all of this.

He gave me a lazy smile, then rubbed his hand over his chin.

“Why are you making this whole situation more difficult than it has to be? We could use magic to get out of here. I sense that you may have some,” he whispered, leaning even closer so our mouths were almost touching.

Thomas suddenly closed the gap and kissed me; hard and without any warning. The tension in the room popped, almost like someone just opened the champagne.

It was so unexpected and I melted into him immediately, the rush of emotions overwhelmed me. We were kissing fast, with urgency, expecting someone to interrupt us at any given moment.

His arms moved around my waist as he pushed me against the wall. I registered a sharp pain at my back but I didn’t care, I wanted more of him. His tongue was thoroughly exploring my mouth and his hard erection was pressing over my navel. Damn it, what was happening? Within moments we had gone from fighting to kissing like we couldn’t get enough of each other.

“Oh Thomas, I missed you so much,” I moaned as his hand slid down over my cleavage. I moaned louder into his mouth just as he paused all movement, sensing a change in the room.

“Hello lovebirds, I heard you needed some help with getting out of here,” the voice broke us apart. I quickly pulled away from him, trying to make myself decent again. Thomas swore and then dragged his hand through his hair. We were both breathing hard, staring at Martha standing on the other side of the cell smiling in at us.

I grabbed the bars.

“Martha, thank god! I thought we would never get out of here,” I said, almost choking on my own air. My lips were still swollen from all the kissing.

“Lovely girl, I think you should stay away from that witch,” Thomas warned me, grabbing my hand to protect me from Martha. “And, by the way, why did you call me Thomas? My name is Duncan.”

The silence stretched for some time and I glanced at Martha. She kept glancing between Thomas and I with amusement. The former dragon shifter had no idea what was going on.

“It’s all right, she’s a friend and she’s going to help us to get out of here,” I told him, feeling a little disappointed that the curse was still active.

Martha wore a long black coat with a hood. She did look like a witch dressed like that and her magic was so strong that even I, being only human, could clearly sense it. Besides, Martha was known all over Farrington Kingdom for her extraordinary abilities.

“We haven’t got much time. I cast a spell on the guards outside,” she said, looking around. Thomas looked unconvinced. That was just tough, I didn’t bloody care that he didn’t trust us. We needed to get the hell out of here and continue with my plan if I ever was going to see him in real life again.

Split seconds later, the bars started to melt and soon enough there was a space wide enough for us to leave the confines of that tiny cell. I navigated through it to the other side.

“Aren’t you coming with us?” I asked Thomas, who was still standing on the other side of the cell, staring at both of us with the mixture of surprise and trepidation.

“Magic? I don’t trust this witchcraft. I don’t believe that it’s safe out there. I’d rather stay in here than leave the cell and get killed in an instant,” he replied, giving Martha a dark look.

“I think I’ll just leave the two of you alone to talk it over,” the changeling replied, sounding annoyed. She nodded at me and left.

I had never believed in magic until I met Thomas who turned out to be a dragon shifter. He was from another Kingdom. It was strange seeing him shift into a huge, powerful, beast of a dragon. It was extraordinary to watch. I didn’t understand his reluctance towards magic, having to remind myself that he was someone else here—not the Thomas that I knew.

“Come on. I’m not going to leave you here. I don’t care if you stole the King’s knives,” I said, not wanting to show him how much I actually cared about him. “Do you actually remember anything? Do you really not know who you are?”

“Of course I know who I am. I’m a thief that likes to keep away from magic. Fae are the worst, they drain you and you’re never the same again,” he replied. Martha mentioned that this alternative persona would be the case, so whilst I understood his lack of trust, it still hurt that I wasn’t getting close enough to him to win his trust back fast enough.

I had a lot to think about, restoring his memories was going to be complicated but the man that I thought I loved was inside Duncan. I just had to bring him back somehow.

“Martha can be trusted, I promise you. I can explain everything, but not here. Besides, I really doubt that you would actually prefer to stay in prison,” I said.

He was battling with his own thoughts. He’d obviously had a bad experience with magic in this alternative past.

After a few more moments of hesitation, he finally caved in and crossed to the other side with me.

“Lead on my lovely and try not to get us caught,” he muttered as we stepped outside. The whole camp appeared to be asleep. The two guards that were supposed to stand outside were snoring loudly. I could sense Martha’s energy everywhere; it was slightly tainted. Smells of roasted meat wafted through the air and my mouth watered a little. Several fires were still burning throughout the camp, but there was no sign of anyone around. I swallowed hard, not seeing Martha anywhere. She had freed us from the prison and left us alone again.

“Come on, this way, let’s get going before anyone spots us,” Thomas muttered behind me, startling me a little.

I followed him and just a second later, we heard a noise in the distance.

“Stop right there!” someone roared.

“Too late,” Thomas quipped, as he grabbed my hand, pulling me towards the forest. The two guards that had been fast asleep woke up suddenly. They seemed disorientated until they saw us vanishing into the forest. One of them shouted out to the others that were on the other side of the camp. Damn it, this whole plan was falling to pieces. Again! We had to disappear under the cover of the forest and lose them before they let the dogs loose on us. I could hear them barking already.

“They are chasing us, there’s too many of them,” I said, running as fast as I could. Thomas must have been important to them, someone truly wanted to make sure that we were returned to captivity. My heart was pounding inside my chest.

At some point I must have let go of his hand and he vanished into the bushes. I lost my balance and rolled on the ground, hitting my head pretty badly. Things were a bit blurry when I opened my eyes several seconds later, I touched my head feeling the blood. Thomas was nowhere to be found. I heard

heavy snuffling very close by. I shook my head and looked up to see a pair of yellow eyes belonging to one of the biggest wolves that I had ever seen in my life. And he was staring straight at me, snarling.

It looked like I was going to die in this realm no matter what I tried to do.



## CHAPTER 3

### Thomas

I KEPT RUNNING, jumping over the fallen trees, and tearing through the bushes when I suddenly realised that the girl wasn't holding my hand anymore. I stopped and glanced around. She was nowhere to be seen. I leaned down, trying to catch my breath. I had to find her. The guards were everywhere and they had dogs.

The King's soldiers had been tracking me for months but I had always managed to slip away just ahead of them. I was a little surprised that the girl stuck up for me when they caught us, that was both noble and stupid at the same time. She had appeared out of nowhere and kept looking at me like she knew me. I was sure I had never seen her in my life before. She was pretty but damn, she was an annoying little bird. I didn't need the hassle.

As far as I was concerned, the King didn't have a daughter, so she couldn't possibly be the Princess. I shook my head and turned around, retracing my steps. My intuition told me that she was important for some reason.

When I tore through the bushes I finally saw her. She was on the ground and she looked petrified. About a metre from her, I saw a huge wolf creeping towards her, snarling loudly.

The girl saw me and her eyes widened in fear. I shook my head and placed my finger to my mouth, shushing her and signaling not to move. The wolf was ready to attack her, his front paws were bent down and his fur was standing up. It wasn't going to be long before he tore her apart.

"You're an ugly little fucker aren't you!" I roared, trying to get him to focus on me.

As I expected the wolf stilled for a moment before it turned its huge head towards me. At the same time, I backed away towards the bushes again.

He pounced split seconds later, attacking with a rage I wasn't prepared for. The knife that I had picked up earlier on was in my side pocket. I grabbed his giant head and tried to hold him away from me, as he snarled. His huge, sharp teeth were mere inches away from my face. The saliva from his mouth was drooling all over me and I knew that if I moved, then I was as good as dead. My strength was slowly dissipating and I had a feeling that this animal could smell the blood on me from all the little cuts I got running through the bushes.

My arms gave way and we rolled to the ground. The animal broke loose and I kicked him with my heavy boot. That bought me just enough time to pull my knife out of my pocket. The adrenaline rushed through me. The beast snarled loudly and it attacked again.

As if in slow motion, I saw my life rolling in front of my eyes—the past, present and future. At the same time, I plunged my knife into the beast's open mouth as it jumped on me. Blood spilled everywhere as its giant body crushed on top of me. I kept stabbing and twisting the knife until the animal finally stopped moving. My lungs were crushed and it took me another several seconds to push him off me. My head was pounding and I was covered in blood. The animal was on the ground; it definitely wasn't going to harm anyone anymore. For a moment I wasn't sure where I was, as the world started spinning away. My breathing was heavy and I knelt back down because I thought I might pass out.

“Oh my Lord, are you all right?” the squeaky voice asked. I turned around, seeing the girl standing a few metres away from me. She was staring at me; horrified, with her mouth wide open. I wiped my eyes that were stinging a little and smiled up at her.

“This isn't my blood love. I'm fine. Did the wolf hurt you?” I asked. She shook her head. “What is your name? I didn't think I asked you that earlier on”

She smiled at me looking relieved. We were far away from any town and the guards were still after us, but we must have somehow lost them before the wolf appeared.

“You were too busy acting like an arsehole earlier on that I never got the chance to introduce myself. My name is Nadine,” she answered, walking up to me. She took a fancy embroidered handkerchief out of her pocket and started wiping my face. It was still pitch black around us, although the moon was shining brightly through the trees.

I let her do it, admiring her beauty as she gently removed the wolf blood from my face. This was disgusting, but she didn't seem to care.

Earlier on I had kissed her. I didn't even know why and now her touch had awakened something more inside of me. I wanted to take her into my arms there and then. She was working carefully until the whole handkerchief was soaked with blood. Unfortunately, the smell was still all over me.

When she stepped into the moonlight I realised that she was truly beautiful. Her green eyes were twinkling at the corners as she smiled up at me. There was something very familiar about her.

“Nadine, what are you doing here?” I asked her, deciding that only magic could have placed a girl like her into my path.

She gave me a mysterious smile that send a jolt of heat down to my crotch. There was a strong attraction between us. How had I missed this before?

“It's a long story. I came here to save a certain someone that has lost his memory,” she replied, throwing the bloodied handkerchief on the ground.

We could hear the insects buzzing all around us. It wasn't safe to stay here, but we appeared to have lost the King's soldiers for the moment.

“What the hell happened to the guards?” I asked, scratching my head. There was something wrong with this place, I hoped we hadn't accidentally stepped into one of these magical fae realms. The guards should have found us by now but only the regular forest sounds buzzed in my ears.

Nadine was breathtakingly beautiful and I wanted to possess her. It seemed that the incident with the wolf had somehow opened my eyes to how much I cared for her already in just this last few hours.

She looked around but she didn't seem very surprised that we were all alone. The tension grew heavy between us. I imagined wrapping my hands around her tiny waist and just pulling her towards me.

My cock went hard as the blood pounded through my core. I had shared my bed with plenty of other women in the past, mainly peasants that I had met on the road. I had never truly wanted to be tied in to anyone for more than a night or two. This was usually during the times I stayed with a bunch

of highwaymen. Women liked being around them so it was easy to score a willing fuck buddy for the evening.

“I think Martha must have helped us somehow. She might have opened another realm when the soldiers were chasing us,” Nadine explained and then brushed away a stray leaf that was on her dress.

I was completely mesmerised by her beauty and the energy that I felt growing between us. I started to unbutton my shirt that was covered with blood. I needed to get rid of these clothes. The heat was rapidly rising inside me. I let the shirt fall on the ground effortlessly.

“The scent of the wolf is all over me. For a second there I thought that animal was sent here to kill you,” I told her, noticing that her eyes wandered down to my chest. Her nipples were erect and I imagined rubbing my cock over them, hearing her moans. I had never wanted anyone more than I wanted her right then. “Do you like what you see love?”

She inhaled quickly and pinned her heavy gaze on me. I gave her a cocky smile, taking a step towards her.

She opened her mouth, probably to throw some kind of insult at me but I didn't let her say anything at all. I shut her lips with mine in a hard, demanding kiss. When our bodies touched, sparks of electricity exploded between us. The energy was extraordinary.

Nadine seemed shocked at first, she probably didn't expect me to kiss her again. I was a little surprised too. She tasted so good; like rose petals and fresh water from the stream on an early summers morning.

I grabbed her cheeks and continued kissing her. She was moaning into my mouth. I needed to bury myself inside her.

Her breasts were perfect, small and round. I grabbed her thighs and brought her to the ground, until she lay out on the dry leaves and I ripped the bodice of her dress right down the front. I started kissing her bare stomach, running my tongue over her hardened nipples. I sensed some hesitance at first but she was moaning, enjoying my slow torture. Our mouths were connected and I couldn't stop touching her sexy body. I felt like she had spellbound me, that we belonged together.

“Oh Thomas,” she whispered again, confusing me a little. I didn't know why she kept calling me that.

I took her nipple in my mouth and bit gently, my hand pushed away more of her ripped dress to let me see and explore more of her. She was trembling, moaning loudly for me not to stop. My cock was hard as a rock.

“I can't get enough of you Nadine, what are you doing to me?” I asked looking into her eyes as my finger danced around her soaked panties. She was wet for me and that turned me on even more.

I didn't give her time to answer, I just pulled the panties down. It was a warm night and I no longer cared about the King's soldiers. My entire attention was focused on pleasing Nadine.

“I don't think ... oh my,” she moaned. I closed her mouth with my kiss, moulding her breasts with one hand and testing how far she would let me go, my mouth was hovering close to her pert nipples. My cock was as hard as a rock and I just wanted to bury myself inside her, but at the same time I wanted to savour every inch of her slowly.

“You're driving me insane ... do you know that? And I still have no idea who you are,” I muttered kissing her thighs gently until she quivered with excitement. I was ready to give her something to remember me by.

I moved my mouth further, kissing the insides of her thighs gently and slowly until, I was situated perfectly between her legs.

She smelled divine as I slowly started pleasing her with my tongue. Nadine began to quiver. I held her hips in place, running my tongue over her clit. She wasn't going to escape my tortures. I wanted her to break apart.

There were no witnesses, we were all alone. Two strangers enjoying hot sex.

"Oh no ... no, Thomas. This is only a dream," she mumbled as I licked her folds. She was tensing her hips, trying to hold herself in place.

I laughed, thinking that maybe that name suited me after all. I teased her as much as I could, until the point that even I couldn't take it much longer.

"No my lovely, this is not a dream. Are you ready to cum for me?" I asked her and when she nodded I inserted my fingers inside her hole. She was so wet, her whole body trembled with the imminent release. She was tangling her fingers in my hair and I kept licking her, thinking that she was the most incredible creature in the universe.

Then she was cumming for me, arching her back and screaming that same name: Thomas. This was becoming slightly annoying, maybe I reminded her of someone else, some other lover from the past. I didn't give her much time to think about anything as I climbed on top of her and bit down on her nipple.

My cock was pulsating as I pulled her legs up. She was staring at me; her cheeks were flushed a deep rose colour but her eyes told me that she was ready for more. I quickly got rid of my pants.

"Are you ready for more my lovely?" I asked, wanting to make sure that our time together was consensual. She nodded, biting her bottom lip and then I buried myself inside her tight entrance. She cried out in ecstasy. I felt like I wasn't going to last very long, she was so tight, moist and perfect.

We were fucking each other in the middle of the forest when just an hour ago we were ready to kill each other. I wouldn't have it any other way.

I kept panting moving my hard cock in and out. I kissed her again, tasting those swollen lips again until she couldn't take it anymore. We were in sync and I wanted to explode inside her right at that very moment.

She dug her sharp nails into my back as we kept on going. Soon we were cumming together, wrapped in each other's bodies.

Sweat poured down the side of my brow and I had to take several long slow breaths to try and slow my racing heart. Nadine was intense.

I grabbed her face and looked her in the eyes. There were so many questions in my head, whilst Nadine was staring back at me comfortable and familiar.

"Who are you Nadine? Why do I have this strange feeling in my gut that tells me that I know you," I told her. Her breasts were magnificent and I wanted more. I needed her to stay with me forever. I had no idea what the future might bring, but I had to figure out a way for us to be together.

"Because you do," she said, still in that enigmatic voice. "You're the man that I have fallen for Thomas, but you have been cursed and placed in this realm without any memories of your true past."

I dragged my hand through my hair and brought her back to snuggle against my body. The forest and trees were my only witnesses of what had happened between us just seconds before.

"This doesn't make any sense. I'm Duncan and I have been living in this kingdom for years," I insisted, trying to remember if I had come into close contact with any fae.

Nadine shook her head and she pulled away from me. The moonlight shone over her naked body; those perky breasts and luscious hips. No wonder I had lost my mind for her. Then she started putting her clothes back on.

"A witch named Julietta put a sleeping curse on you. I don't really understand why or how I came

to be here with you but you're currently asleep. I'm trying to bring you back."

## CHAPTER 4

Nadine

I HAD HOPED that his memories would come back after such an intimate moment, but he kept staring at me like he still had no idea what I was talking about. Martha's plan was failing. Maybe I hadn't done enough.

After all, he didn't know me that well and it was just sex. Something was missing and I didn't know what more to do. Even without his memories, I knew that he was the one. And I was willing to fight for him.

"A witch?" he asked with disbelief and then quickly added. "Then, we will stay away from magic from now on."

Thomas was still naked and I couldn't take my eyes off him. Our moment had passed. We couldn't stay here much longer. Martha said that I only had one chance to bring him back.

I needed her now and she had vanished. I had no idea what was I supposed to do next.

"I think we should start walking north," I suggested, hoping that Martha would give me some kind of sign, so I would know what to do. Thomas nodded and started putting his clothes on.

The smell of the wolf's blood was still intense. It made me feel a little nauseous, so I was glad when we finally left that place and started moving on. Soon enough it was going to be dawn.

We didn't talk much on the way; we didn't have to. We seemed to have reached a place of quiet understanding between us. Thomas clasped my hand in his and brought me close to his body. If raw, passionate sex couldn't break the sleeping curse, then I suspected only true loves kiss would.

The forest was immersed in silence. I kept glancing behind me, paranoid that we were being followed. It felt like the trees and the animals were watching us. I didn't know where that wolf had come from. Maybe someone had sent him over to kill me, or Thomas. It was difficult to figure out what was real and what wasn't anymore.

After an hour the sun finally started rising. We entered a large open valley, filled with purple flowers. The view was breathtaking. There was a fast flowing stream that ran down from the mountain and the rays of sunshine were already reflecting off the surface of the water.

"What is this place? It's stunning!" I asked, feeling the warmth of the sun on my cheek. I instantly felt relaxed and calm.

It was such a shame that we hadn't made love here. This place would have been the perfect setting and afterward Thomas would have definitely remembered me.

"I have no idea. I think we should rest here for a while," Thomas suggested. We carried on walking a little further into the meadow until we heard some music in the distance.

Thomas glanced at me, but I shrugged my shoulders. I didn't know what it was either. Behind the bushes, on the other side of the meadow there were many fae dancing around. It seemed that we had walked in on some kind of party.

There were maybe a dozen of them around and they all seemed to be having lots of fun. There was a large table, decorated with more colourful flowers, with music coming from a magical box that was placed on a slightly smaller table. I had never seen anything like it. The fae were dancing, laughing and a few were kissing. I recognised them as fae, with their pointed ears and sensing their magic.

"All right, I think we've seen enough. We need to get the hell out of here before they notice us," Thomas said, grabbing my hand again.

He quickly turned around and dragged me with him. I didn't really want to leave this idyllic valley just yet.

"Hey humans, where are you going? We have a special table just for you. Come and join us."

I didn't want to leave this wonderful place. Thomas stopped and all of a sudden, another fae appeared in front of us. This one was female and she was breathtakingly beautiful. Normally fae were blond, but this female had jet black hair and skin as white as snow. She smiled at us as she approached. I wasn't fearful of her at all.

Thomas stared, mesmerised by her beauty and for some reason I wasn't even jealous.

"We would love to stay, but we are being chased by the King's soldiers. I'm afraid they might arrive here soon," he replied. His voice was vibrating with emotion.

The female touched him then and he exhaled sharply.

"Come on handsome, stay. No one is going to harm you here," the female said and I knew she was right.

We were safe here. The soldiers couldn't access this realm. Thomas hesitated looking over at me.

"I suppose we can stay for a little while."

"Excellent. What is your name handsome?" The female asked, leaning over and kissing him gently in his cheek. She had stopped paying any attention to me whatsoever.

I was just about to ask her about her about this place when I felt someone touching me.

"Hello beautiful, would you care to dance with me?" the velvety smooth voice asked. Then I saw a fae right in front of me. He moved his hand to my wrist smiling at me and all of a sudden it felt impossible to say no, not that I wanted to. I never wanted to leave this place. This was paradise, everyone was so lovely and all I wanted to do was dance all day.

I quickly nodded and he wrapped his hand around my waist pulling me amongst his friends. When I glanced back at Thomas I saw that the beautiful female fae was kissing him. Rage filled me instantly but then the male squeezed my wrists and I forgot all about it. I didn't feel jealous anymore. I had to share my love for him and the fae kept telling me that I was the most beautiful creature that he had ever seen in his life.

We were dancing and I was twirling around, laughing until I was out of breath, having such great fun. The world around me kept spinning away. The fae caught me in his arms and I stared into his gleaming eyes.

He was so handsome and I wished he would kiss me.

"I'm very thirsty," I told him instead, looking at all the wonderful drinks on the table. He brushed the hair away from my face.

"Come my dear, taste some ambrosia," he said and pulled me to the table. After I drank some

refreshing liquid I saw that there were other couples sitting around the table.

Thomas and the fae woman were there too. She was sitting on his lap, his hands were squeezing her buttocks and they were kissing very passionately. I just about to walk over to them and tell her that he was mine when a wave of warmth rushed through my core. All of a sudden, I didn't care that he was with someone else. The male fae that I had danced with earlier, encouraged me to finish my special drink.

I sat down on the comfortable sofa and enjoyed the ambrosia. The handsome fae situated himself right next to me. He placed his hand on my leg and started gently caressing my inner thigh. His touch immediately awakened a desire inside me. There must have been something in that drink, because I was suddenly so turned on.

I tilted my head backwards and moaned loudly when the fae kissed my neck, then started caressing my breasts, twisting my hardened nipple with his fingers. This was wonderful, I had never felt more aroused.

The fae male smelled of the earth. My sex was throbbing with release. I could hear moans all around me and I was getting wetter. My panties were soaked through as a couple next to us started fucking out in the open.

The fae kept whispering all these lovely sweet and sexy things into my ear but there was something nagging me at the back of my mind that pulled on my awareness, something important that I had forgotten about.

"What's your name handsome?" I asked him, pulling away and trying to gather my bearings. I was under a charm. I knew that this fae with the incredible blue eyes wasn't for me.

I was in love with Thomas.

"Jacob, my dear human. You're very sexy and I want to make love to you right here, right now," the fae said, tearing my already torn dress apart again and leaning down to lick my nipples. I shut my eyes enjoying him pleasing me.

My sex throbbed and I felt so incredibly turned on. His hands hovered down to my sex, caressing and stroking me. He spread my legs and kept rubbing my clit. I was on the edge of orgasm, ready to explode for him.

Then I heard a voice, or maybe it was a whisper, in my head. Someone was trying to talk to me. I wasn't imagining things.

*"You don't belong here, resist them Nadine, resist ..."*

In that moment I finally remembered this wasn't right at all, I was betraying Thomas.

Now everything started to make sense.

I pulled away from Jacob and jumped off the chair, breathing hard and trying to pull my dress back together. Suddenly, my mind was very clear and I knew what I had to do.

Thomas was almost full on fucking that female fae, he was taking her clothes off, kissing her breasts. The spell must have affected him much more than me. He was deep within her charms.

"Thomas, stop touching that fae. You're being charmed, we are all under the effects of powerful magic!" I shouted at the top of my lungs.

It wasn't long before I lost control completely. I started screaming as loud as I could when Jacob tried to calm me down.

I kicked him away and when the others tried to get to me, something happened. I couldn't explain what was going on but they weren't able to touch me. Some kind of energy was released soon after that. I felt every small hair rising at the back of my neck. I felt so powerful like no one could touch me, or hurt me.



The energy threw them away and a few crashed to the ground.

I felt the warmth spread from my head, all the way down to my toes. I glanced at my hands remembering everything, especially my night with Thomas. Now the electrical current was rushing through everyone and everything. Suddenly, heavy clouds appeared in the sky and the whole valley didn't look quite as beautiful as I'd thought it did earlier.

The fae lost their stunning looks and Thomas looked completely disorientated. He looked at the once beautiful female who was now ugly and deformed.

"Nadine, what's going on?" he asked as the whole world turned very gloomy and dark. We both sensed the bad energy that was suddenly spreading everywhere like an invisible fog. It was time to get the hell out of here. The other fae were slowly picking themselves off the ground.

I couldn't answer him. I felt rising pressure around my forehead. The female fae was backing away from Thomas. This unexplained gloomy energy was getting to us. I knew it could kill us both. Maybe Julietta had something to do with it.

Thomas took out the knife that he had killed the wolf with, looking around with fear. The fae were slowly approaching us. We were well outnumbered.

Then, I had an idea for one last ditch attempt. It was silly but I didn't have any other option. I ran to Thomas, throwing myself into his arms. He seemed shocked when I pressed my lips onto his in a hard, demanding kiss, especially when the world around us was falling apart. The kiss was deep, passionate and our bodies connected with energy. When I pulled away breathless, his eyes seemed much more intense, gleaming with powerful magic.

"Nadine, my Princess. You brought me back, you've awakened me from the curse," he whispered, smiling at me.

"True loves kiss. I can't believe it worked," I said, glad that I had finally done something right. Then the fae, the valley and the gloom began vanishing before our very eyes as if they had never been there at all.

Darkness obscured my vision and I felt like I was falling.

When I opened my eyes again, I was somewhere else. Martha was staring down at me smiling.

"What happened? Where's Thomas?" I started asking her, wondering what the hell happened in that other realm.

"I'm here Nadine," the familiar voice spoke up and a pair of strong hands embraced me from the back. His scent and the warmth made me calm down instantly. "You broke the sleeping curse with that amazing kiss. You did it. You saved us."

I turned to face him and smiled.

"It was the only thing that came to my mind. If it wasn't for Martha I think we both would be dead already though," I admitted.

"Yes, well done love. Julietta can't touch you again," Martha said. "But this doesn't mean that we're rid of her. She might try again sometime in the future."

"Does she know that you were involved?" I asked.

"Probably not, but we'll never know. She wants revenge and she's going to try again someday. You two will have to be careful from now on. She's still a threat."

"We'll be ready when she strikes again, thank you Martha, for everything that you have done for us," Thomas stated. The changeling gave him a wink and then started walking towards the forest. I turned around and hugged Thomas, listening to the beat of his heart. He must remember our night in the dream too because it was all clear in my mind.

It was intense and it felt real.

“It’s time for me to go back to the castle, I’m going to speak to my father. He needs to know that I want to be with you. He needs to understand that this war has gone on for too long,” I said, still worried a little about our future.

“One thing at the time Nadine. I have a plan and trust me, one day we will be together,” he replied and that was good enough for me. I knew that when he gave me his word, I could trust him. He was the love of my life and I was willing to fight for him.

The end